

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 9, 2020

Secretary Alex Azar
U.S. Department of Health and Human
Services
Hubert Humphrey Building, Room 416 G
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Administrator Seema Verma
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services
(CMS)
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Hubert Humphrey Building, Room 337H
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar and Administrator Verma:

I write to you today to bring to you the dire situation facing many hospitals throughout Florida. Due to following recommended guidelines to cancel elective surgeries and non-urgent medical procedures while dealing with COVID-19, hospitals throughout our districts are faced with budgetary shortfalls and are facing the difficult decision to make drastic cuts, including measures such as laying off or furloughing personnel. This not only includes doctors and nurses directly treating patients, but it also includes other staff such as nutrition workers, security, sanitation staff, finance technicians, and other workers critical to the operation of the healthcare facility.

During this pandemic, we must do everything in our power to avoid reductions in staff at our healthcare facilities. As you know, in the latest *CARES Act* legislation, Congress allocated over \$100 billion specifically for our hospitals to reimburse them for outstanding costs while also ensuring their providers receive the needed support for COVID-19 related expenses and lost revenue. The intent of this provision was, in part, to quickly inject funding directly into our hospital system, so that our healthcare facilities would not be forced to reduce staffing.

This afternoon, Vice President Pence and Administrator Verma briefed the Democratic Caucus on the status of that funding, informing members that the current plan is to release the funding in three tranches. The first \$30 billion scheduled for disbursement tomorrow would be to providers treating Medicare recipients, with subsequent disbursements at a currently unknown date addressing professionals who typically do not see Medicare patients and to cover costs of treating the uninsured.

Our hospitals, and the staff risking their lives each day working at these facilities, cannot afford to wait. We must give the teams at our hospitals the assurances that their budgets will remain intact, so they can focus their efforts on ensuring that they have the resources needed to protect their workforce. Our doctors, nurses, and other professionals working in our healthcare facilities must have the peace of mind that their jobs are not at immediate risk and so that they can concentrate their efforts on saving lives. We urge you to disburse this funding immediately so hospitals can avoid taking drastic steps to reduce their payrolls, and to quickly give Congress the information needed to assess the amount of additional funding required in future legislative packages addressing this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Kathy Castor
Member of Congress



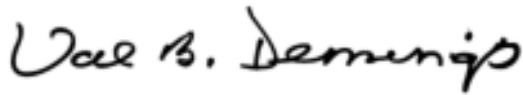
Ted Deutch
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
Member of Congress



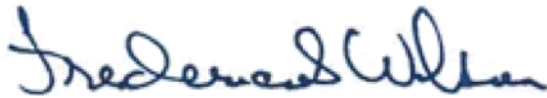
Charlie Crist
Member of Congress



Val Demings
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress